Sampling Across Seasons, Shifts and Segments

GUIDING QUESTION *Look at the last thirty cases your internal audit examined. What month were they from, what hour of the day, and which kind of guest? And did you choose any of those three, or did they choose themselves?*

Property: _____ Completed by: _____ Date: _____

How to use this sheet: work through the four parts with the people who own the process. The left-hand text comes from the book; the empty columns are for what is true in your property.

1. Verification Pact: what the market says, what actually holds, and your property

What the market says	What actually holds	In our property
A sample of ten per cent is sufficient.	No. ISO 9001 and ISO 19011 prescribe no universal ten-percent rule.	
Random selection removes sampling bias.	No. Random selection reduces some selection bias but does not ensure that all relevant conditions, shifts or segments are represented.	
Sampling must be statistical to be defensible.	No. Judgement-based sampling is recognized; statistical sampling is one option.	
A larger sample is a better sample.	Not necessarily. Relevance and representativeness matter more than raw size.	
Samples should be drawn in proportion to volume.	Not automatically. Low-volume but high-obligation or high-consequence strata may require deliberate representation.	
A sample that finds nothing demonstrates conformity of the population.	No. A clean sample supports a conclusion only within the limitations and sampling risk of that sample.	
The auditor need not state what the sample did not cover.	It should. The report or audit record should make the scope and material sampling limitations clear enough for the conclusion to be understood.	

2. Objective evidence: what an auditor would examine

Line	What to examine	Found? (Yes / Partly / No)	Notes and location
Document	The audit plan, examined for a statement of the population and its variation written before the sample was drawn, and for a stated floor in any stratum the audit considered relevant.		
Record	The sampled cases themselves, tabulated by month, by hour and by segment. This takes ten minutes and characterises the audit more completely than the findings do.		
Read	The property's segment analysis against its contract file. Where a small segment carries most of the signed obligations, a volume-proportional sample has been aiming away from the risk.		
Told	Ask the auditor how the sample was selected. An answer describing a period or a convenience is a convenience sample however it is later described.		
Seen	Who performed the work in the sampled cases, compared against who works in the property's busiest weeks. In seasonal properties the two lists frequently do not intersect at all.		
Absence	There will be no statement anywhere of what the sample did not cover, and no case in any sample performed by a seasonal employee. Both absences are ordinary and neither has ever been noticed.		

3. Common mistakes: self-check

Mistake	Why it matters	Present here? (Yes / Partly / No)
Sampling a population that does not exist.	Stays, arrivals and rooms are categories of convenience; the property's real populations are its segments, and they differ in what has been promised to them.	
Drawing samples in the quiet months.	The same process in high season is performed by different people at a different pace with workarounds that exist for six weeks a year.	
Sampling only the afternoon.	A continuous process examined at one hour has been examined in one of its three versions.	
Proportioning to volume.	The segment carrying the property's signed obligations is frequently small, and volume-proportional sampling aims away from it with the appearance of rigour.	
Omitting the floor.	Without a stated minimum, the stratum that matters most can be represented by nothing while the sample looks entirely adequate.	
Stratifying on everything.	Three dimensions and five segments produce forty-five cells, and a sample of thirty that tries to fill them has stratified on nothing.	
Never checking whose work was sampled.	In a seasonal property the people who perform the work in the busiest weeks frequently appear in no sample in any year.	
Reporting without stating what was not covered.	One sentence prevents a reader from concluding something the evidence cannot support, and its absence is what turns a good audit into a misleading one.	

4. Action plan

Position from the book / gap found	Action in our property	Owner	Deadline
The population is named before the sample is drawn.			
Three dimensions are considered and two are chosen.			
Proportion follows obligation, not volume.			
Every relevant stratum has a floor.			
The report says what the sample did not cover.			

In brief

Sampling is used because everything cannot be examined, samples are not necessarily representative, and the population must therefore be defined before anything is drawn. In a hotel the population an auditor imagines almost never exists: the operation varies along three axes at once (segment, season, and shift), and convenience selects in the same direction on all three, towards the quiet month, the afternoon, and the guest who generates the tidiest paperwork.

Source: The Helm and the Lens, Volume 2b: The Lens, subchapter 3.8. This sheet does not reproduce the text of any standard; work with your own copy of ISO 9001:2026 from an authorised source.